

Catawba County Emergency Medical Services Standard Operating Guidelines

Incident Command

Catawba County Emergency Medical Services will utilize the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to ensure command and control of our incidents.

This system allows command to be structured as either single command or unified command.

Most incidents can be handled utilizing a single command structure when EMS is the only agency involved or is the primary agency involved. (i.e., house calls, cardiac arrests, etc...)

- Small events or single agency responses do not require “official” activation of NIMS. In these cases our SOGs and Chain of Command are sufficient to provide command and control of the incident.

More complex incidents which involve multiple agency response should be structured utilizing unified command whenever possible.

- If unified command is not utilized, then the primary response agency should conduct the incident command (i.e., technical rescue should be commanded by rescue, a structure fire should be command by fire, a mass casualty event should be commanded by EMS, etc...).

Establishing Command

The first arriving EMS unit at an incident should determine if command has been established by contacting the communications center and asking if command has been established, who is the incident commander, and what frequency is being used for operations.

- YES - Check in with the appropriate person **and follow the NIMS Chain of Command.** Independent actions on the part of any responders are inappropriate. If a staging area has been established all incoming units will report to the staging area managers and will remain there until given a tactical assignment.
- NO - Determine if the incident requires the “official” activation of NIMS.
 - YES – Establish command, name the incident, provide a brief assessment of the situation, and request a tactical frequency for the operation.
 - NO - Proceed with the call utilizing our SOGs and Chain of Command as necessary.
- Once command has been established any additional incident command positions (i.e., Staging Area Manager, Operations Section Chief, etc...) will be designated by the incident commander.

Transfer Command

An incident commander should consider transfer of command anytime a more qualified individual arrives at the scene.

- If an EMS employee is in command of an incident, upon arrival of a Crew Chief, Shift Supervisor, Training Officer, or EMS Manager at an incident that person will evaluate the current command structure and determine if command should be:

- Maintained as is
- Assumed by the officer
- Reassigned to a more qualified individual

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